

(Washington, DC)— {Representative Gwen Moore (D-Wisc.), Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.), and Kay Granger (R-Texas) today introduced legislation that would require staff in child care facilities that are funded through the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) to undergo comprehensive criminal background checks. Currently, only a handful of states require that child care providers complete all of the various background checks that are available – state and federal fingerprint checks, as well as comparing individual’s names against sex offender lists, child abuse, and neglect registries.

This legislation is a priority of the Women’s Caucus, of which Congresswoman Moore is Vice Chair. Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky is Co-Chair of the House Women’s Caucus.

“It is absolute madness to think that parents around this country might be dropping their child off for day care at a facility that unknowingly employs a registered sex offender, or someone with a history of child abuse,” Congresswoman Moore said. “We have a whole host of resources that could help prevent unnecessarily putting children in dangerous situations, but we need to put these resources to full use. Someone who has a prior history of spousal abuse, child abuse or physical assault has no business taking care of children day in and day out, and it is our responsibility to protect our kids from undue threats.”

The Child Care and Development Block Grant program is intended to support families by increasing the availability, affordability and quality of child care in the United States. The funds can be used for child care centers, group homes, family child care providers, in-home care providers and sectarian organizations. Under CCDBG, all providers must be licensed under state law, and all must satisfy state and local health safety requirements.

This legislation would require states receiving these funds to complete a comprehensive background check on child care providers. Individuals convicted of the following felonies would be prohibited from working at child care facilities: child abuse or neglect; spousal abuse; crimes against children (including child pornography); crimes involving rape, sexual assault, or homicide; physical assault or battery; drug-related offenses committed within the five years prior to submission of a background check; or a substantiated case in any state child abuse and neglect registry.

“Parents want their children to be safe in child care,” said Linda Smith, Executive Director of the

National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA)

“Unfortunately, the reality is that state background check requirements are not comprehensive and few states know whether or not they are paying individuals with a violent history to care for children.”

“This legislation is an important step forward to ensure that violent convicted felons do not receive federal or state dollars to care for our children,” Smith said.

According to NACCRRA data, Wisconsin child care centers do not currently require a fingerprint check of newly hired staff as a part of the standard background check. Also, while Wisconsin centers do check criminal history records, they do not explicitly require checks of sex offender registries.

###